

Ten Easy Ways A School Can Increase Physical Activity Opportunities for Students

Regular physical activity is important for children to maintain good health, to keep fit, and to assist them with achieving academic success. The following ideas will help provide ample opportunities (beyond health enhancement classes) for students to be physically active while at school:

1. **Teaching Academics through Physical Activity:** Teachers lead children in a 10 minute session of physical activity while teaching them a math or language arts lesson. Utilize the resource *Mind and Body* for a variety of grade ideas for K-5 students. *Mind and Body* may be found at: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/pdf/health/Mind&Body.pdf>
2. **Take the Lewis and Clark Fitness Challenge:** Fourth and fifth grade students can travel the 864 mile western bound route just as Lewis and Clark did by participating in the Lewis and Clark Fitness Challenge. This self monitoring, 8 to 16 week program can help motivate children to be physically active each day. This curriculum guide for 4-5th grade students may be found at: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/schoolfood/L&CFitness.html>
3. **Big Sky Fit Kids:** This free program allows youth group teams (classrooms, student groups, 4-H, etc.) to increase their individual physical activity levels in an accumulated activity challenge. Big Sky Fit Kids, the youth component of Shape Up Montana (from Big Sky State Games), challenges kids to participate in this free, fun, three month competition. Students are given an individual tracking sheet and incentives are provided to encourage youth teams to be active each day. <http://www.bigskygames.org/shapeup/bigskyfitkids/>
4. **Keep Kids Active At Recess, and Before and After School:** Many schools are structuring walking programs for students and staff to “walk the talk” concerning physical activity. With the assistance of the school’s parent organization, a walking program can be set up relatively easily. Students are taught how to track their own miles and incentives are given to participants at five-mile intervals. Grand prizes given to the student and staff member walking the longest distance at the end of the year. www.fitnessfinders.net or www.creativewalking.com
5. **Brain Power Break:** School administrators are starting to offer a 15-30 minute “walking break” for students and staff once a day (Lavina, Montana) to once a week (Park City Elementary and Daly Elementary in Hamilton) in order to help students be better prepared to learn in the classroom. A specific day and time is set for the entire school to join the principal in a walk and, often, parents and community members are invited to this fun and active brain power break.

6. **Reward Students with Physical Activity Opportunities:** Teachers and school administrators are allowing children extra recess time or a daily walk around the school neighborhood as a way to reward the class for good work or behavior. This not only allows children to get the physical activity their bodies need and enjoy; it helps to eliminate the unhealthy habit of rewarding children with food. Check out Wisconsin's *Movin' & Munchin' Schools Program* at the following site: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/pdf/movnmunchn.pdf>
7. **Walk to School Programs:** With the assistance of parent or community organizations, schools are encouraging children and families to walk to school. The Centers for Disease Control sponsors an International Walk to School Day each October, but the biggest benefit comes if schools can encourage children and parents to walk to school once or more a week.
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/kidswalk/>
8. **Walking School Bus Program:** This idea is to have parents or community members provide an opportunity for students to walk together to school through a "walking school bus". An adult volunteer agrees to walk a specific route and "picks up" children along the way while they walk to school.
www.walkingschoolbus.org
9. **Promotion of Lifestyle Physical Activities to Students and Staff:** Through the use of pedometers (www.creativewalking.com) either being used in the health enhancement classes or staff wellness programs, walking can be promoted as an easy, economical and fun (with a friend or family member) way to stay physically active. Many schools are also adding fun lifestyle activities to health enhancement classes or as electives for high school students. Things like ballroom dancing, rollerblading, snow shoeing or cross country skiing can be added to the health enhancement curriculum. There's even a way to take a Physical Education class online now. Check out the following website:
www.mselc.org
10. **Engage Student, Families, and Seniors In Physical Activity Events:** There are many annual events your school community may want to participate in during the school year. Hopefully they will not be just a once a year events, but will spark interest in helping everyone be more active each day. Consider the following:
 - Go the Distance Day (Big Sky Games) – May 2006
http://www.bigskygames.org/shapeup/bigskyfitkids/fitkids2005_gothe_distance.html
 - ACES Day (All Children Exercise Simultaneously), May 2006
www.lensaunders.com/aces/aces.html
 - Grandparents Fitness Walk, or Family, Health, Fitness Day USA, May 2006, <http://www.fitnessday.com/>
 - Sponsor a Family Fun Night at your school: Enlist the help of health teachers or community fitness professionals to plan this event. Contact Montana Team Nutrition; kbark@mt.gov